

hundred-thousand in Hunan. It should be remembered, however, that these ratios are based on incomplete figures and that the incidence of violence may have resulted as much from Communist pressures as from the authoritarian character of the traditional family. 674

Divorce and marriage figures released by the Communists are equally difficult to render meaningful because of gaps in statistics and the different time spans and categories which are given for the figures cited. For the nation as a whole, the number of divorces was reported to have risen from 186,000 in 1950 (the last seven months of it under the new Marriage Law), to 409,500 in 1951, and to 398,000 in the first half of 1952.²⁴ The latter figure is only slightly higher than the number of divorces for all of 1952 in the United States, which has about one-quarter the population of China.²⁵ The Communist press announced that between January and May, 1951 the Justice Department in the Central-South Region handled 32,881 cases dealing with marital disputes, constituting 60 per cent of the total number of civil cases in the region. Of the marital disputes, 25,992 were divorce suits, and most of these were initiated by the wives, according to the press announcement.²⁶ A similar source at a later date reported 586

24. Ibid., 243, p. 3.

25. Divorces in the United States during 1952 totaled 292,000. See the World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1955, Harry Hansen, ed., New York, New York World Telegram and The Sun, 1955, p. 312.

26. S.C.M.P., 171, p. 16.

that from May 1950 to January 1952 in Kiangsi, 586 121,000 free marriages had been arranged with the assistance of the Democratic Federation of Women, more than 72,900 divorces had been instituted after the failure of attempts at reconciliation, the marriages of 16,454 child brides had been annulled, 40,920 engagements arranged by parents had been terminated, and 33,834 couples had been aided in establishing harmonious homes by the intercession of the People's Government. 27

D. Reorientation of Family Reform

Between the time of the publication of these 185 divorce figures in March 1953 and the end of the 596 year, the Communist approach to marriage and 531 family reform seemed to have undergone a change. There are indications that the regime's emphasis on new freedom for women and the prominent publicity given statistics on divorce had led to the Marriage Law being popularly termed the "Divorce Law." 28 At the same time, resistance in the rural areas to sudden changes in the old institutions of marriage and family relations were becoming evident to Party leaders as the result of the late 1952 investigations were tabulated.

A shift in the pace and in the propaganda emphasis on marriage and family reform was

27. C.B., 236, p. 4.

28. China News Analysis, 5, p. 2.